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Creativity Without Value

Alison Hills and Alexander Bird

Abstract

The standard definition of creativity takes it to be essential to creativity that it is disposed to produce objects of value. We argue that it is possible to be creative but disposed only to produce objects of no value.

1 Introduction

Among philosophers and psychologists, value is widely regarded as essential to creativity alongside the originality of the ideas produced: “There is a broad consensus that creative products and acts must exhibit originality and be valuable” (Gaut and Livingston 2003: 8). “Creativity is the ability to produce work that is both novel (i.e. original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e. useful, adaptive concerning task constraints)” (Sternberg and Lubart 1999: 3). “What is it to be a creative person? There is a minimal sense according to which it just is to possess the ability to produce novel and worthwhile artefacts” (Kieran 2014). The standard view, therefore, defines *creativity* as a trait characterized by the disposition or set of dispositions of an individual:

1. To have novel ideas (*originality*)
2. Which are valuable; or produce objects which are valuable (*value*)

Our aim is to challenge the claim that creativity is valuable because it is essential to creativity that it is disposed to produce objects of value. We reject this claim in Section 2—creativity can produce objects without value of any kind. In Section 3 we examine the widely cited “original nonsense” argument for value in the definition of creativity (attributed to Kant) and find it unsound.

We therefore reject the standard view. In our opinion an improved definition of creativity would reject value but retain originality. To originality we add three related conditions not

normally found in definitions of creativity, the most significant of which is imagination. Creativity, in our view, is the disposition or set of linked dispositions of an individual: to have many ideas (*fertility*); which are novel (*originality*) and generated through use of the imagination (*imagination*); and to carry through these ideas to completion (*motivation*). These four component elements work together in a creative individual (an individual cannot be thought of as properly creative who sometimes has imaginative new ideas but when she does so is not motivated to work on them and when she feels motivated, cannot have the ideas). Creative acts and products are the manifestations of these dispositions. We do not depend on the correctness of our view in rejecting the standard view (that would beg the question). It is nonetheless useful to have a plausible foil to the standard view.

2 Creativity is not essentially disposed towards producing value

According to many psychologists and philosophers, our definition of creativity lacks a crucial element: the creative disposition is essentially a disposition to create objects of *value*.

“Creativity involves generation of novelty that deals effectively with a problem or need of an individual or community.” assert Cropley and Cropley (2013: 5). “The need may be concrete, abstract, even spiritual.” Psychologists mostly prefer a two part definition of creativity: originality plus “effectiveness” (Barron 1955; see Runco and Jaeger 2012). “Effectiveness” captures the idea of utility or value—a creative idea should be worthwhile, for example, by solving a problem or meeting a need. Boden (2010: 29) lays down a three-part definition: “Creativity is the ability to come up with ideas or artefacts that are *new, surprising, and valuable*” but does not defend the inclusion of value.

We reject the requirement that what is created has value. First, on the ground that creativity can have wholly negative outcomes. Secondly, because we can recognize an object as being the product of creativity independently of identifying the value in that object. And thirdly, because individuals who imaginatively produce some objects of value, and some objects without value, are most plausibly manifesting the same disposition in so doing: rather than two different dispositions (one to imaginatively produce things of value; one imaginatively to produce worthless things).¹

2.1 Creativity can produce objects of no value

If creativity is defined as the disposition to produce objects of value, then it ought not to be possible to be creative and to be disposed to produce objects that have no value. We consider three ways in which creatively produced objects might have value and argue that it is possible to exercise creativity in producing objects that have no value in any of these respects.

- First, creatively produced objects might have objective value, for instance a creatively produced work of art might have aesthetic value (beauty or sublimity, for instance); a creatively produced scientific theory may have “scientific value” (which may be truth, knowledge, or understanding etc.)
- Secondly, a creatively produced object may be valuable in virtue of being good “of its kind”.
- Finally, an object might be good in virtue of being good for the individual who produced it. Perhaps it is good for her because it contributes to her well-being, objectively considered; perhaps it is good for her subjectively, because it satisfies her preferences or meets her own standards for her life going well.

2.1.1 Creativity without objective value

Discussions of the value of creativity often focus on creativity in particular domains, notably the arts and sciences. Arguably, calling an artist or scientist creative is a term of praise, which implies that the ideas (or artworks, or scientific hypotheses) that they produce through the exercise of creativity are especially good. But creativity is not restricted to the arts and sciences. And it is much less clear—to say the least—that calling an agent in other kinds of domain creative is to praise that agent, or to imply that her ideas are particularly good.

Consider a creative serial killer, who finds novel and ingenious ways of murdering his victims, or a creative torturer, who regularly devises new methods of torment. There is no contradiction in the idea that creativity can be put to terrible ends. Nor in such cases do we think that there is some value to the expression of creativity that is just massively outweighed by the harm in the product. “Creativity” is not a term of approbation in these contexts, nor do

we imply that their ideas are objectively good after all, when we call such appalling people creative. Rather, the creative use of the imagination in producing harm makes matters worse.²

Creativity cannot be a disposition to produce objects that have objective value, because it can be exercised in domains where the ideas produced are objectively bad and lead to actions that are morally abhorrent. But perhaps a connection between creativity and objective value can be maintained if we restrict our attention to creativity in the arts and sciences, and similar domains in which creativity is naturally taken to be a positive quality, perhaps even a virtue, and where it is much more plausible that the ideas produced are objectively valuable.

But even here, an artist or scientist may be creative, and produce ideas without objective value. Consider a scientist who creatively devises a theory (or even a series of theories) that turns out not to be true. Such a theory may have no scientific value whatsoever: it may not even be approximately true; it may lead to no scientific knowledge or understanding. Of course we acknowledge that an idea may not be true (even approximately) but may nevertheless have an indirect value. Investigating a plausible (but false) hypothesis may help science to progress. Discovering why it is false may help our understanding of the subject matter and may even point us in the direction of the truth. Mill's (1859) defence of free speech makes a similar point—our understanding of the true may be deepened and made more resilient by critical engagement with the false. In order to gain knowledge by inference to the best explanation, it is important to consider the strengths of competing (false) hypotheses to know that the true hypothesis is true. Even so, not just any falsehood can help us better appreciate the truth. Some scientific ideas do not even have this indirect value. They are completely worthless. Below we mention the work of Nikola Tesla which included worthless ideas for a thought camera and a death ray, and Herschel's hypotheses about life on the Moon. Creationist ideas, such as special creation, may be creative attempts to find a theory that reconciles creationist precepts with the evidence. But they are scientifically worthless.

2.1.2 Creativity without attributive value (“good of its kind”)

Although novel methods of torture and murder are objectively bad, perhaps there is something to be said in their favour. A method of torture that is effective at inspiring fear and causing suffering may be excellent according to the standards of its kind, i.e. excellent *qua* method of torture. Maybe creativity is a disposition to produce objects that may not be objectively valuable but are nevertheless good with respect to their kind.

This suggestion avoids the problems of tying creativity too closely to objective value. But it has a very significant difficulty of its own. Objects belong to multiple kinds: by which should they be judged? Presumably, we must say that creativity is the disposition to produce objects that are good *qua* some relevant kind (even if there are other kinds to which they belong, by whose standards they are not good). Typically (though not always) the most relevant kind will be that intended by the creator.

But this will not do either. A torturer may devise a new method of torment—a variation on the rack, let us say—but find that it is a failure. Perhaps it causes death too quickly, without enough suffering on the way. As a method of torture, it is no good. But it does not follow that no creativity was exercised in coming up with the idea.

As we have already seen, a scientist may creatively devise a novel hypothesis, investigate it, and find that it is a dead-end. As theories go, it was not a good one. Indeed if it is a mathematical conjecture it might in fact involve a contradiction. Consider Frege’s *Grundgesetze* (1893, 1903), which, whatever its other merits, must be regarded as a failure with respect to its most salient (and intended) kinds—a sound proof or attempt to derive the truths of mathematics from the laws of logic—because of its inconsistency. Russell nonetheless comments on Frege’s dedication to creative work (Russell 1962). Perhaps even an inconsistent theory which fails in its primary purpose, can be good in some respect. For instance, it might inspire other, more successful attempts. At the very least, the discipline may progress by finding out that it is a failure. Frege’s *Grundgesetze* was valuable in these respects, most notably the inspiration that its inconsistency gave to Russell. But it is not relevant to whether Frege was creative, that his failure caused others, later, to be creative, or

that it was good in these other respects. If Frege had never published his work, if he had had no influence on the discipline and had not inspired Russell and others, he would still have been creative in writing the *Grundgesetze*. Historians of mathematics recognise the creativity in Girolamo Saccheri's (1733) several (failed) attempts to provide Euclid's fifth (parallel) postulate, but unlike Frege's work it was ignored and did not even have positive effects on subsequent mathematics.

Similarly, in the arts creative ideas may fail to have value by the standards of a relevant or intended kind. Arseny Avraamov was an avant-garde composer whose works included novel microtonal compositions, graphical sounds created by drawing on the sound track of a film, and the famous symphony of factory sirens. It is at best unclear whether these works are good of their kind: the evidence of posterity is that they were a dead end. But there is no doubting Avraamov's creativity.

2.1.3 Creativity without value for the creator

Perhaps we have been looking in the wrong place for the value of creativity. Perhaps it is not that the objects produced have some objective value or are good of their kind, but rather that they are good for the individual who creates them. Indeed some of the definitions of creativity regard the value in question as value for the creative individual.

In what way might a creatively produced object be good for an individual? There seem to be two possibilities: either it contributes to the individual's well-being, objectively conceived; or it satisfies her preferences and thus contributes to well-being, subjectively conceived.

The latter is certainly not true of all instances of creativity. Many creative individuals are often intensely dissatisfied with their work (Johannes Brahms burned many of his compositions; Gerard Manley Hopkins and many others have done likewise).

Suppose instead we take an objective account of well-being. Is it more plausible that creatively produced objects contribute to a good life? Not necessarily. In many cases the object neither serves a need, nor brings a benefit. The act of creation may bring fulfilment to

the individual. But that does not make the *product*, the work produced, valuable. The work may not give its creator pleasure; it may not satisfy her preferences; it may not meet the standards that she herself has set, it may fail to solve the problem that she posed for herself.

Moreover, depending on the details of the account of well-being, it may be that producing objects that are harmful or otherwise bad is not good for you. It is really good to spend your time creating ever more elaborate methods of torture? However satisfying you find the work, and how effective the methods you devise, the answer is surely no.

Perhaps the connection between creativity and well-being might be saved by the claim that creatively produced objects always constitute an achievement, and achievements are always good for you. But first, unless creatively produced objects are regarded as achievements simply in virtue of being creatively produced, it is far clear that they do actually constitute achievements. Is a false scientific theory, a dead-end, an achievement? There is no obvious reason to think so. Secondly, even if we accept that creatively produced objects are often (or even always) achievements, it is not at all clear that all achievements are good for you. As we have already said, achievements in the field of torture are not good for you.³ It is possible to procrastinate creatively. It is not very plausible either that this constitutes an achievement or that it is good for you, in some respect or other.⁴

Thus we have considered the three most obvious ways in which creativity might be the production of value, and have shown that none is essential to creativity. Nor do we think it plausible that creativity is the production of one or other of these. Creative individuals can be disposed to produce objects which fail to have value in any of these respects.

2.2 Recognising creativity without assessing value

If creativity was the disposition to produce objects of value, it would not be possible to recognize instances of creativity without assessing the value of the objects produced. If the object turned out to be valuable (and other conditions were met), its production might be the exercise of creativity; if not (*ceteris paribus*), not.

But it is not necessary to evaluate the objects produced in order to assess the creativity involved in their production. For many forms of activity there are creative ways of carrying them out in addition to mundane ways. We can recognize the creativity in George Stephenson's 1850 Britannia Bridge over the Menai Straits. To do so we note first that he faced the problem of needing to create a bridge with large spans (to avoid interrupting shipping) that was strong enough to carry railway locomotives and freight. By imaginatively deciding to build the bridge from two wrought iron rectangular tubes, Stephenson was thereby able to give his bridge sufficient strength while increasing the longest wrought iron span to 140m from 10m thitherto. We do not need to know whether the bridge was beautiful or ugly or whether Anglesey benefitted from a rail connection to make that assessment; we do not even need to know whether bridges with longer wrought iron spans are better (in any respect) than bridges with short ones. Instead we need to know how imaginative, novel and fertile were his ideas, and how strong was his motivation to bring them to fruition.

Above we argued that we could judge Arseny Avraamov as creative without approving of or even assessing the value of what he did. All we need to see is that, he was imaginative and original; he had many such ideas and was strongly motivated to carry them to completion

2.3 The creative disposition

Individuals who are creative often produce many ideas, of varying quality. Their creative dispositions sometimes lead them to devise objects that are valuable, at other times objects that are worthless. The inventor Nikola Tesla produced, alongside productive work on alternating current, a wide range of bizarre ideas for inventions, including a death ray, as well as theories of no merit concerning the nature of spacetime and the electromagnetic field. William Herschel, discoverer of Uranus and of infrared radiation had unsupported theories about the habitability of other planets (that the Moon was rather like the English countryside, the surface of the Sun was cool and inhabited).

A defender of the standard account of creativity would have to say that Herschel had two sets of dispositions, one set (creativity) producing the ideas about Uranus and infrared radiation;

and quite another set (definitely not creativity) producing the ideas about living on the Sun and the Moon as being similar to the Cotswolds. This is not psychologically realistic: it is the same psychological traits, notably a powerful imagination, that led Herschel to both sets of ideas. It is therefore not appropriate to give different explanations of how each set of ideas as produced—both are explained by the use of his imagination. A defender of the standard account might concede that there is really only one psychological disposition at work here, but claim that the term “creativity” is reserved for the use of that disposition when it results in valuable ideas; the use of that same psychological disposition to produce idea of no value or of negative value, is by definition not to be called “creative”. If so we would expect it to be a clear oxymoron when “creative” is used in connection with bad ideas. But it is not—as we have seen, “creativity” can and commonly is used in circumstances where the ideas produced are valueless or even very bad. So it is neither useful nor correct to describe Herschel as creative only in devising ideas that turned out to be true, and uncreative when he postulated hypotheses that led nowhere.

3 The original nonsense argument

The argument most often cited as a reason for including value in the definition of creativity is that it serves to distinguish creativity from the disposition to produce “original nonsense”. Generating the latter would not, the argument goes, be an exercise of creativity, and so something in addition to originality is required. That something is value. Stokes (2016: 248), for example, asserts:

... most theorists maintain that creativity requires value. As Kant put it, “there can also be original nonsense” [1781/2000, 5: 308, 186], and nonsense is not creative. So, creativity requires, in addition to novelty, that an x be of some value to its maker and/or its context of making.

As it stands, this argument is weak. Even if the premise is correct, that there is no creativity in the original nonsense, that shows only that originality is not sufficient, not that value is necessary. It might be that the argument presented is a shorthand for a more detailed

argument provide by Kant himself. But it seems to us that Kant was not offering the argument attributed to him.

The “original nonsense” remark is in the context of discussion of beautiful art. Kant finds these artworks puzzling. How can they be created? Not by the mechanical application of a rule, he thinks, for no such rule could produce works of genuine value. Any that are produced by the application of a supposed rule are, he says, of very poor quality.⁵ Rather “Beautiful art is art of genius.”⁶

Genius is “the inborn predisposition of the mind through which nature gives the rule to art”. Genius is contrasted with, on the one hand, following a determinate rule; and on the other hand, with mere imitation of other works of art. Instead it consists primarily in the imagination.

What Kant calls genius, therefore, is very close to what we call creativity. And Kant seems to say perfectly clearly that genius (creativity) necessarily involves value:

Genius (1) is a talent for producing that for which no determinate rule can be given, not a predisposition of skill for that which can be learned in accordance with some rule, consequently that originality must be its primary characteristic. (2) that since there can also be original nonsense, its products must at the same time be models, i.e. exemplary, hence, which not themselves the result of imitation, they must yet serve others in that way, i.e. as a standard or rule for judging. (Kant 1781/ 2000, 5:307–8, p. 186–7).

This passage appears to do exactly what the proponents of the “original nonsense” argument say it does, that is, it expresses an argument that genius consists in originality, and in addition requires that the products of genius not be original nonsense, but be valuable (“set the standard or rule of judging”). So it seems perfectly in order to cite Kant in support of the traditional account of creativity, where creativity (genius) is defined as the combination of the two familiar components: originality and value.

However, matters are not so simple. A few pages later, Kant appears to contradict himself. He says that creative genius by itself may not produce works of value. Instead, it needs to be constrained or tempered by aesthetic judgement or “taste”:

Taste, like the power of judgment in general, is the discipline (or corrective) of genius, clipping its wings and making it well behaved or polished; but at the same time it gives guidance as to where and how far it should extend itself if it is to remain purposive; and by introducing clarity and order into the abundance of thoughts it makes the ideas tenable, capable of an enduring and universal approval, of enjoying a posterity among others and in an every progressing culture. Thus if anything must be sacrificed in the conflict of the two properties in one product, it must rather be on the side of genius. (1781/2000, 5: 320, 197).

In this quote, Kant appears to say that in order to produce ideas that are “capable of enduring and universal approval”—that is, valuable ideas—creativity (genius) must be constrained or guided by an entirely separate quality, a kind of judgement. As he also says, the imaginative power of genius produces art that is inspired, but it is in virtue of the power of judgement that the art is beautiful. Art can be rich and original in ideas but nonsense, and it is taste, not genius that brings the imagination in line with understanding and thus ensures that the ideas are good ones. In other words, the view that Kant expresses here is remarkably similar to our own; he defines creativity in terms of producing original ideas through the power of imagination, and he denies that creativity (in the absence of good taste, or good aesthetic judgement) is a disposition to produce value.

So what is the best interpretation of Kant’s view of genius: does he think that genius cannot produce “original nonsense”, but will always produce ideas that are valuable as well as original? Or does he actually argue against that view? How is it best to understand these two apparently contradictory passages?

Let us start with the second passage, on taste. One way of reconciling it with the first, is to reinterpret it very significantly. Perhaps Kant does not really mean that genius and taste together produce beautiful art. Just before this passage, he introduced the idea of “spirit”.

Spirit is the “animating principle of the mind”; it is also very closely identified with the power of the imagination.⁷ It is the quality of mind that enables an artist to produce artworks that have “life” or “energy”: that which is lacking when one describes a poem as pretty but without spirit, or a story as well-organized but without spirit. Perhaps what Kant means to say in this passage is that spirit and taste together produce beautiful art. Now if we regard genius (creativity) as spirit and taste—that is imagination and judgement combined—then genius will produce original and valuable art, never original nonsense.⁸

So this reading of the passage supports the idea that creativity (genius) necessarily produces value. But it does so at the cost of ignoring the awkward fact that Kant quite explicitly talks about genius (not spirit) being constrained by taste here, not only in the passage quoted but in the very title of section 50 “On the combination of taste with genius in products of beautiful art”. This interpretation therefore makes his views consistent, only by having him make a very significant confusion in formulating his own theory.

Moreover, the two passages can be reconciled in a way that is more charitable to Kant. Let us look again at the earlier passage. It appears in a context in which Kant is trying to explain how beautiful art is created: remember that he does not think it can be produced by following a rule or imitating other example of good art. Kant argues that genius is *necessary* for beautiful art (“beautiful art is possible only as a product of genius” 1781/2000, 5: 307, 186). When he continues: “its products must at the same time be models, i.e. exemplary” he is standardly interpreted as saying that the products of genius are (always) valuable, that is, that genius is not merely necessary but is *sufficient* for beautiful art. But that may not be what is meant. Instead, he may saying precisely the opposite, namely that genius can produce originality of all kinds, including original nonsense, beautiful art is possible only when the products of genius are exemplary. The second passage, a few pages later, explains when the products of genius are exemplary: precisely when genius is constrained and guided by good judgement, namely, by taste.

As a reading of Kant, this has the advantage of making his views consistent without making a very blatant error (of confusing “genius” and “spirit”); instead, it has him merely moving from a discussion of how genius can produce beautiful art to the conditions under which it

will do so (which he will describe in detail later), without marking the distinction clearly. It is a more charitable reading of Kant, and, of course, supports our own account of creativity, that creativity can produce original, imaginative ideas that lack value.

Even if Kant does not make the case, perhaps there is still a good argument that original nonsense is not creative, and thus that creativity must involve value. Without more detail, it is difficult to assess such an argument. Nonetheless, under any reasonable interpretation, it is unsound.

Either the original nonsense has content or it does not. First assume that it does not. That makes the premise, that the original nonsense is not creative, more plausible. But then the argument is clearly invalid. The missing element that creativity requires in addition to originality might be anything that is not itself entailed by originality but which is inconsistent with being nonsense. Value is one candidate, but there are others—notably, imagination. If the original nonsense has no content, then it cannot be the product of the imagination, which is essentially representational.⁹ Therefore the imagination is a plausible candidate for what distinguishes original nonsense from a creative product. No content means no use of the imagination; which means no creativity.

On the other hand, if there is some content to the “nonsense”, then it is not so clear that there is no creativity at all. We use many terms denoting traits to describe people when they have a trait to a notably greater degree than normal; even though we acknowledge that many (perhaps all) have the trait to some degree. We typically use the term “creative” to pick out those individuals who are creative to a degree somewhat greater than normal, while being willing to acknowledge that the majority of people can show creativity to a modest degree if given the opportunity. So it might be that a concrete instance of alleged original nonsense would be recognized as an instance of creativity, albeit of the most minimal kind. (What linguists call “creativity” is the ability to produce novel sentences. This use is not inappropriate. It just focuses on one form of creativity some of whose instances are quite insignificant with regard to creativity in the wider sense, but not entirely empty.) With this thought in mind, we might distinguish between “minimal creativity” and “substantial creativity”.¹⁰ Original nonsense with some content may be a mark of minimal creativity but

not of substantial creativity. According to our view, minimal and substantial creativity would not be distinguished by the value of what is created, however, but by the number, originality and imaginativeness of the ideas produced.

4 Conclusion

Modern liberal societies set great store by creativity; the value placed on it is unquestioned. It is hardly surprising then that almost all theorists regard value as essential to creativity. Yet the only argument typically cited in favour of that standard view, the “original nonsense” argument, is unsound (and is not even to be found in Kant to whom it is attributed). Against the standard view, we have argued that creativity can easily, in the wrong circumstances, be put to producing objects of no value and of disvalue (on any reasonable construal of “value”). It is the same disposition in either case.

Rather than value, we propose that that the imagination is essential to creativity: creativity is the disposition to use the imagination in the fertile production of ideas and the motivation to bring those ideas to fruition. Such a disposition will not necessarily produce valuable ideas and objects (not even *ceteris paribus*).

This conception of creativity raises many questions. What is the imagination and is it really involved in every example of creativity? What about instances of creativity in which an individual is apparently struck by an idea without having any conscious thoughts about it beforehand? Is the imagination still involved? Is creativity, thus conceived, still likely to produce value? Is more creativity better than less?

We intend to say more about these important issues elsewhere. Here we will just say that we take a liberal view on the imagination and the forms that it can take. And our view is that more creativity is not always better than less. In fact, creativity tends to produce works of value only when two additional conditions are in place: a tradition of models and exemplars that are themselves valuable, to stimulate and guide the imagination in its search for new items of value; and good judgment to discern which of the new ideas produced by the

imagination do indeed have value. Without these conditions in place, creativity without value is not only possible, but likely.

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¹ Grant (2012) also argues that creativity (which he calls “imaginativeness”) does not necessarily produce objects of value, though he does require (as we do not) that it should be reasonable for the creator to think that her ideas would be valuable, or achieve something.

² Cropley and Cropley (2013) analyse in detail the contribution of creativity to crime.

³ Many, but not all, objective theories of well-being involve some moral content, such that actions that are morally wrong (or in other ways falling short of moral virtue) are to that degree not in your interests. But the point holds as long as there are aspects of well-being other than achievement, even if they are not moral. For in that case even something is an achievement but is very bad with regard to other aspects of well-being, may not overall be in your interests, and so producing it may not be good for you.

⁴ Grant (2012) also argues that creativity (imaginativeness) is not always good for its possessor, but that it can be, through its connection to autonomy and (sometimes) to self-realization.

⁵ Kant 1781/2000, 5: 307–8, 186–7.

⁶ Kant 1781/ 2000 5:307, 186.

⁷ Kant 1781/2000, 5: 313, 191–2.

⁸ Moreover, there is some textual support elsewhere for this kind of account of genius: “The mental powers, whose union (in a certain relation) constitutes genius, are imagination and understanding” (Kant 5:316, p. 194). But what Kant seems to mean is that the relationship between imagination and cognitions required for genius is very different from the relationship in which the two stand in ordinary cognition. It may still be true that to produce value, genius, even understood in this way, must be combined with additional judgement in the form of taste—and Kant of course argues that it does in the very next section.

⁹ Kind 2016: 3. That imaginings are representational, and so have intentional content, is widely accepted among theorists of the imagination and is entailed by our view of the imagination as searching the space of possibilities.

¹⁰Or ‘little-c-creativity’ and ‘Big-C-Creativity’ to use expressions in common use among psychologists. Minimal or little-c-creativity is creativity to the degree that pretty well every human beyond infancy possesses, whereas substantial or Big-C-Creativity is the greater and relatively unusual degree of creativity possessed by individuals we characteristically call ‘creative’.

Psychologists are not all in agreement as to where to draw the line between little-c-creativity and Big-C-Creativity, which is why we have avoided the terms. Sometimes it appears that the distinction is close to the minimal/substantial distinction, while for others Big-C-Creativity is the creativity only of geniuses.